

RESEARCH PROJECT

Literary Poetics. Speech Modes and Genres.

1. Description:

Nature of the Project:

Scientific and pedagogical

Main areas of knowledge:

Literary Theory, Comparative Literature, History of Literature and Culture, Linguistics, National Literatures (Portuguese, Japanese, etc.)

Objectives:

- a) To investigate the pertinence of the study of the *speech modes and genres* in the actuality and the functioning of these categories in the context of the Literary Studies, the Linguistic Studies and the Cultural Studies as interactive spaces.
- b) To propose a redimensioning of the relations between different *modes and genres* by means of a comparative approach in Cultural History and Western Literature, thus responding to the need of legitimising the universes silenced by the canonical studies and amplifying the understanding of the cultural functioning of literature.

Approximate duration:

One year.

Coordination:

Maria da Penha Campos Fernandes

(PhD in Literary Theory, Associate Professor at the University of Minho)

2. Justification:

The relevance of modern scientific research on the topic of *speech genres* is not limited to the fact that it has constituted one of the ‘genetic’ questions in the field of Literary Studies, the main object of Ancient and Classic poetics that subsidised the construction of the poetic-fictional and theoretical canons privileged in the process of establishing and organizing the different Western literatures. In fact, in the margins of these cultural constructs, silences and mutterings have emerged which were and still are not restricted to the ethnic, colonial, social and sexual problems, for they

affect also the selection as such of the genres and respective submodalities to be privileged or repressed, as well as the structuring of the discourses and the (de)valuation of certain themes, authors and literatures throughout the centuries.

The study of the speech *genres*, categories which are actioned by the historicity of the cultural institutions, will allow us to put in a comparative perspective a set of “constant” traits that both operate as flexible sustainers of the literary systematization and that favour the delineation of transtemporal constructs, the *speech modes*. Being proximate to a notion of “universals” which has been left open (to discussion), the *speech modes* serve as an amplified understanding of the historical dynamics of the cultural polisystem, where Literature and its genres often work in very productive partnerships, always involving that which is not Literature.

The study of the speech genres and of its subset – the literary genres, by the attention that it imposes to the character/ process of their historical identities and consequently to the movement of the respective border spaces, will prove useful in the handling of the issues related to *modal and genological* hybridism, whose relevance has been confirmed by a variety of socio-cultural reasons, amongst whose the freedom of poetic-fictional creation of the most innovative literary sectors. The observation of processes of sedimentation, of interchange, of wearing out (erosion) of hegemonies and renovation of the reading protocols of speech genres in the course of Literature, allows us to penetrate the privileged terrain of the possible knowledge of what this phenomenon might be, considering its triple semiotic dimension (syntactical, semantic, pragmatic).

The *New Literary Culture* grows in the dialogue between the Literary Studies and the Cultural Studies. It traces eventually suspicious connections for the radical sentinels of the canonical stability and the acquired material privileges themselves. And if this *New Literary Culture* does not want to lose sight of the fitting of Descriptive Poetics and Historical Poetics into the disciplinary domain of Literary Theory, as it was constituted from the beginning of the twentieth century, it does not intend to become alienated from the space of interdisciplinary and cultural mediation which has been designated as “Theory” either. A theory of what is necessary to know in a (de)constructive dimension and which had as pioneers those agents frequently dislocated from geo-cultural or socio-cultural peripheries into the centre of the Western university systems, a globalizing affirmation from one other intercontinental cosmography: Derrida came from Argelia to Europe and wrote for the world in a disconcerting style and thought very much his own; Foucault was homosexual, became interested in the history of sexuality, of madness and of infamous men; Said experienced definitive exile, was a North-American Professor born in Jerusalem when the city was still part of Palestine; Raymond Williams was the son of a railway worker and became interested in working-class literature and the cultural impact of the media; Julia Kristeva is a feminist intellectual who came from Bulgaria to France and

who wrote for the Chinese woman; Gayatri Spivak was born in Calcuta and knew how to impose her post-colonial reading of Derridian philosophy in the U.S.A. A nomadic theory, destitute of an exclusive address in a particular sector of Culture, since it allows itself the necessary journeys for the critical construction of knowledge in a socio-cultural universe self-conscious of the intensity of its mutations. A theory which is an intelligent look and a penetrating discourse into the less superficial layers of culture, in which the world makes its more pressing options and its obscure meanings germinate, being these not the less important. A theory which has even been considered by important researchers, such as Rorty and Culler, as 'a new genre' of discourse characterised by its aptitude to produce long-reaching arguments and cultural effects.

The study of the *modes* and *genres* of discourse is not, for all these reasons, a complex of anachronic *topoi*. This is a structural subject in cultural terms, over which it is still necessary to reflect, even as a potential form of liberation from the near exclusivity of the triadic scheme of the narrative, dramatic and lyric genres. One has to rake the fire in order to revive it. New questions need to be posed, even this simple one: in which of these three genres can a culinary recipe be integrated? Or: in which 'literary' genre can the poem "Recipe to make a hero" by Reinaldo Ferreira be integrated? Could it be a narrative, due to its sequentiality? And simultaneously an inverted parody, *i.e.*, intellectually valuing of the 'genre' culinary recipe? Finally: Does every human discourse integrate itself in a genre or mode?

This is an issue of crucial interest, be it because *modes* and *genres* of discourse are categories implicated in the acquisition of the communicative competence to deal with the macrodiscursive structures or because they function as a field of potentialities for the productive writer; either because they orient the expectation of the receiver or because the *modes* and *genres* challenge the researcher to try to construct credible points of reference from which it is possible to observe, to analyse, to compare or to measure the play of forces between the *tradition* and the *novelty*; over which two is structured the argumentative vector that Western Literature has got hold of in order to organise itself and display itself as a socio-cultural practice necessary to the expression and the representation of man in the world for, at least, thirty centuries.

3. Methodology:

Presentation of the project to the researchers invited to participate in it. Scientific interchange with the coordinator, realized in previously arranged sessions or through electronic mail, according to the needs derived from the issues being treated. Voluntary adhesion motivated by the sensitization to the importance of this subject in the actuality.

4. Research Team (Effective Members) and Work Proposals:

1. Arturo Casas (PhD in Literary Theory, Chair of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at the University of Santiago de Compostela, Spain)
The theory discourse and its effects (conceptualization, subjects, programmes)
2. Cristiana Sofia Pires (MA in Literary Theory and Portuguese Literature by the University of Minho)
The fantastic as poetic mode and genre
3. Cristina Álvares (PhD in French Literature, Associate Professor of French Literature at the University of Minho)
Medieval literary genres. Heroic song, troubadour lyric, romance
4. Frank A. A. Landt (PhD in Literature, ex-Professor at University of Minho)
Contradiction and diversity – the speech genres in Japanese Literature
5. Isabel Ermida (PhD in English Linguistics, Auxiliary Professor at the University of Minho)
Between time and laughter—diachronic reflexions on the comic
6. Margarida Pereira (PhD in English Literature, Auxiliary Professor at the University of Minho)
“Words in freedom”: the unclassifiable avant-garde text
7. Maria da Penha Campos Fernandes (PhD in Literary Theory, Associate Professor at the University of Minho)
Two fundamental modes of human speech: the realistic and the fantastic
8. Maria de la Salette Pereira (MA in Literary Theory and Portuguese Literature by the University of Minho)
The literary genres and Portuguese feminism
9. Paula Alexandra Guimarães (PhD in English Literature, Auxiliary Professor at the University of Minho)
The lyric mode
10. Secundino Vigón Artos (MA in Linguistics, Lecturer of Spanish at the University of Minho)
The epistolary mode
11. Tsuyoschi Takamatsu (MA student in Literary Theory and Portuguese Literature, Lecturer of Japanese at the University of Minho)
The reorganization of the system of genres and the creation of the Japanese nation

5. Translation Team

Alexandra Corte-Real (German)
Ana Cristina de Sousa Pereira (Spanish)
Carlos Pazos Justo (Spanish)
Tsuyoschi Takamatsu (Japanese)

6. Publication of the collective volume:

The new literary culture. For an actual poetics of speech modes and genres

7. Final seminar:

Presentation of the research results and of the volume to the academic community.

Braga, University of Minho, September 2008.

Maria da Penha Campos Fernandes
and
Paula Alexandra Guimarães